

SB XLV
 THE LAS VEGAS HILTON
SUPERBOOK
 THE WORLD'S LARGEST RACE & SPORTS BOOK
 THE WORLD LEADER IN PROPOSITION WAGERING

Pittsburgh STEELERS vs Green Bay PACKERS
 Sunday, February 6th, 2011
 Cowboys Stadium - Arlington, TX
 3:25 PM - FOX

LAS VEGAS HILTON
 5900A-2548-0577
 \$10.00 Straight bet
 SB XLV @ ARLINGTON, TX
 101 STEELERS
 +125 MLB
 Event Date 2/6/2011
 Win \$12.50 to pay \$22.50
 Ticket Cost \$10.00
 01339 W000104 Book 2/06/2011 14:23:21

NO.	TEAM	PK	MLB	TOTAL
101	Pittsburgh S			
102	Green Bay P			

45 +115
 -135

1ST HALF WAGERING

NO.	TEAM	PK	MLB	TOTAL
1101	STEELERS			
1102	PACKERS			

1ST QUARTER WAGERING

NO.	TEAM	PK	MLB	TOTAL
151	STEELERS			
152	PACKERS			

3RD QUARTER WAGERING

NO.	TEAM	PK	MLB	TOTAL
155	STEELERS	+105	9½	-120
156	PACKERS	-125		EVEN

4TH QUARTER WAGERING

NO.	TEAM	PK	MLB	TOTAL
157	STEELERS	EVEN		13 -11
158	PACKERS	-120		-11

SPECIAL POINTSPREADS
 NO PARLAYS ON SPECIAL POINTSPREADS

159	STEELERS	+7½	-240	167	STEELERS	-3½	+210
160	PACKERS	-7½	+200	168	PACKERS	+3½	-250
161	STEELERS	+10½	-380	169	STEELERS	-7½	+375
162	PACKERS	-10½	+320	170	PACKERS	+7½	-450
163	STEELERS	+14½	-700	171	STEELERS	-10½	+550
164	PACKERS	-14½	+500	172	PACKERS	+10½	-750

My feelings on the final descent to the massive runways at McCarran Airport were probably similar to a child's reaction when the castle at Disney's Magic Kingdom comes in to view. You have heard dramatic retellings of Las Vegas trips by friends, family, or that coworker that you only pretend to like because being insincere to yourself is better than being the resident a-hole of the office. However, no words, pictures, or hyperbole can truly prepare you for the first time that capitalism's Aurora borealis springs up from the dark desert floor.

My Frontier Airlines flight on January 30 made that landing. My trip was for business, becoming a certified blackjack dealer because it was literally cheaper to fly to Vegas, stay for nine nights, and eat, gamble, and fulfill my wish to go to Vegas while of legal age, than paying for it at the dealing school just fifteen minutes from my house. Fortunately, my flight left before Al Gore's antithesis fell from the sky, so I had no delays, which was convenient for my first flight since January 2007.

The Akron-Canton to Denver flight was uneventful, save for the screaming kid two rows back that I secretly hoped would be shoved into the cargo bay. At least the overhead bin might have muffled the sound. I could have dealt with that.

Far more enjoyable was the flight from Denver to Las Vegas. A gentleman from Madison, WI was on my flight, heading back home to go back to work. After ignoring my angst toward his Wisconsin Badgers hoodie, we talked Big Ten sports for the one hundred minute flight. His mantra was “run the ball”, referencing Bret Bielema’s coaching shortcomings in the Rose Bowl. I don’t mean that he would say it only when talking about the game. I am fairly certain that he says it after every sentence. If he were a doctor, the appointment would go something like this:

Patient: Doctor, this itching and burning is getting difficult to deal with. What do you suggest?

Badger: Run the ball.

Patient: What does that have to do with this wart?

Badger: Run the ball.

Patient: I don’t understand.

Badger: RUN THE F*CKING BALL, BRET.

Patient: My name is Steve.

At least his girlfriend must be a fan when he runs between the tackles.

Then, the tremendously convenient distraction I needed appeared 4,000 feet below. Out of the desolate landscape appeared an acid trip of illumination. I had an impression of Vegas in my mind when I left Cleveland. I thought I knew what to expect. The expression “Everything you think you know is wrong” was proven to be accurate.

I was last in Las Vegas at the age of 11, just before my 12th birthday. I only know this because Bellagio was opening the week after we flew home. My sister was a Continental Airlines employee and so my parents flew free and I flew at a substantial discount. Somehow, I think that attributed to my present-day gambling addiction. I do not really remember much past Circus Circus and the Midway upstairs, other than going to Sam’s Town with my grandfather and now-levelled establishments like Westward Ho and Stardust.

Boarding a shuttle to the Strip, because I did my homework prior to my trip (and I suggest you do the same because it can save you money), led to my first taste of the Vegas nightlife. There’s something ironic, yet expected, about a Las Vegas Jimmy Buffett’s Margaritaville blaring 50 Cent’s “In Da Club” at 11:30 local time on a Sunday night. The sheer enormity of the properties surrounding my relatively miniscule destination, Imperial Palace, was a bit of a shock. Last time I was in Las Vegas, MGM was the class of the Strip. Now, monstrosities like Venetian, Palazzo, and Paris touch the clouds.

Despite my travels, I did what any sane, excited person would do, I went exploring. Nevermind the fact that it was 3:30 am back home, where my fiancée was wrapped snug in her bed, I was on a mission. That mission? To see what the new Vegas was all about by going to the most recognizable hotel and casino on the Strip.

Bellagio was booming. You would have thought they were giving something away. In essence, they were. They were giving the chance to escape the drudgery of normal life. Girls pranced around in eight inch heels with dresses that would have shown a tampon string. Their stereotypically douchey-looking companions were fabricating an image right along with the rest of the eager hopefuls to enter The Bank nightclub. As I sit here and type this, I still wonder what percentage of these women were escorts. Fifteen dollar table minimums and more languages than Rosetta Stone provided everything but familiarity.

Completely overwhelmed by jetlag, the new Vegas which I clearly had not accounted for and a stomach rumbling caused by the fact that airlines no longer consider their absurdly high fares to be worthy of a damn bag of peanuts, I wandered to the McDonalds adjacent to Harrah's, pounded a McDouble, and retreated to my room.

A brief public service announcement: While the overriding sentiment about Vegas is that your accommodations are largely irrelevant because you "won't spend much time in the room anyway", do yourself a favor and stay in a decent place. Imperial Palace was free for me through my player's card for Harrah's casinos all over North America. As far as I'm concerned, IP should be free for anyone who dares to stay there. I was welcomed with a rundown gaming floor that looked more like an illegal underground casino in Chinatown than something Las Vegas had to offer. My room came complete with a busted toilet seat, a shower head with less water pressure than an un-pumped Super Soaker, light switches that must have turned on garbage disposals in nearby Henderson, and a TV that was maybe an inch bigger than the one in the seat back in front of me on my Denver flight. But, I got free entertainment thanks to the "In-House" channel, which explained how to play the table games using a woman doing impersonations. Fran Drescher was helpful at the Pai Gow table. So, too, was Judge Judy at Let It Ride. All that was missing was Sally Jesse Raphael teaching me baccarat. Instead, that distinction went to Joan Rivers.

The next day, the gaming school I was attending opened at 9 am. Since I was budgeting myself, and therefore too cheap to pay for wireless internet at Imperial Palace, though it was probably for the best considering 56k wireless was the height of the hotel's technological advances, I

made the mistake of wondering, "How far could it be?"

One hour and ten minutes and a Starbucks appearance to steal WiFi later, I found myself walking directly through a microcosm of Las Vegas. On one side, low income apartments, most of them featuring a cacophony of domestic disputes, crying children, beaten-down twenty-somethings smoking cigarettes in between bowls, and 1987 Toyota Corollas missing two wheel covers, but featuring dice hanging from the mirror. On the other side, the Las Vegas Country Club Estates, barricaded by a stone wall and metal bars at the top.

Rather than bore the readers with tales of my dealing education, let's just leave it at the fact that I found the monorail the next day and used taxi rides from the monorail's closest stop to the gaming school. What the gaming school did give me, however, outside of a certification to deal blackjack, was perspective from the locals. Many of the school's students were transplants to the area, but had been there for years. They were remarkably laid back about the influx of tourists week in and week out because they simply avoided them. They frequented downtown casinos or worked downtown as bartenders or entertainers.

I felt comfortable with the gaming school crowd because, at the end of the day, they were trying to make an honest living in a city that is anything but honest. There's almost a brethren among these residents. While class divides probably exist, there is a strong sense of blue collar ideals. Even the wealthier individuals have or continue to grind it out by gambling, owning property, or simply trying to keep on top of things in a place where fortunes can change in an instant.

Fast forward to Wednesday. A few months back, I happened to click on a Twitter link to Chad Millman's "Behind the Bets" podcast. His guest was Bryan Leonard. Bryan Leonard is somebody who is referred to in the sports betting industry as a "sharp" or "wiseguy". Sharps are called such because they are very good at their craft. The public are referred to as "squares". I'm sure you can figure that out. Leonard sells his picks to subscribers through his website footballwinners.com. His picks have been featured on other websites and, though his wife is employed, a large chunk of his family income comes via selling picks through his service and making them. His self-described workday regiment sounding ideal to me. He begins offering picks over the phone in the early morning hours for the east coast crowd. Then he makes his bets mid-afternoon, especially if he is waiting to see what the public is going to do to the betting line, and spends the rest of his night with his wife, rarely sitting down and watching the games he's bet. Contrary to this, I eagerly watch the games I bet on TV or via online box score. Years of experience with betting games relaxes a bettor and I have not yet reached that point.

After hearing Mr. Leonard reference Cleveland and our woeful sports teams a handful of times, I did some more research on him. Finding out he was originally from Cleveland, I shot him an email with no real expectations. To my surprise, my inquiries were answered. He was an Akron grad like me. We exchanged a few emails and when I told him I was coming to Vegas, he agreed to meet up with me if he could find the time. Well, even with Super Bowl week, he found the time. We met up at the Hilton Superbook and looked over the 25-page packet of proposition bets.

Bryan gave me several nuggets of sports handicapping knowledge. He introduced me to his buddy Leon who supports himself solely on sports wagers. Teddy “Covers” Sevransky, of covers.com, shook my hand and welcomed me to the city. We discussed what we thought would happen in the game and Bryan, Leon, and Teddy compared the prices of the props at different books around town. One of the beauties of sports betting in the present-day is the internet. Updated lines are constantly available, whether you are looking at offshore (online) sportsbooks or the ones in Vegas themselves. “Shopping around”, as it’s called, is one of the chief elements to being a successful handicapper. It takes a solid bankroll and a network of friends to be most profitable, but it was one of the biggest lessons I learned. Little differences like minus-105 vigorish or a half-point line movement can make a huge difference.

By Friday, I had a strong grasp of the rules, regulations, and procedures of dealing blackjack and began to focus my energies on the mob-like atmosphere on the southern end of Las Vegas Blvd. Sidewalks looked like moshpits and the public transportation, both the monorail and “The Deuce”, the city bus, were crammed like a college experiment of fitting people into a phone booth. My father was supposed to fly in on Friday night, but his flight was delayed until Saturday morning.

My Friday also consisted of leaving the un-guest-friendly confines of Imperial Palace and heading to one of the oldest properties remaining on the Strip. I have tremendous memories of Circus Circus from trips with my late sister, my nephew, my parents and siblings. The casino floor itself and the upstairs Midway for kids had not changed a bit. Despite the faded paint covering the exterior, some money had been poured in to the rooms and they were a breath of fresh air compared to IP.

Naturally, as with any good hotel stay in a tourist destination full of fantasy and excitement, I got a Bose surround sound audio picture of the couple in the room next to me bumping uglies just ten or fifteen minutes after I checked in to the room. My guess is that I avoided this uncomfortable scenario at Imperial Palace due to fear of the bed collapsing like Scott Norwood in the Super Bowl. Either that or nobody was in the adjacent rooms.

I pondered putting my ear to the wall and awaiting the end of this rendezvous so that I could begin a slow clap at the end, but there was no telling if the act was worthy of a slow clap. It could have been worthy of a raucous wall-pounding and sliding a gold star sticker under the door. Rather than make this decision, I went across the street to Crazy Leroy's Sports Book to scan the atmosphere and check out the line movements.

The Strip might as well be broken down in two different streets. The south end of the Strip begins at Mandalay Bay and ends at Wynn Resort. Wynn is probably closer to the midpoint, but after Wynn's accompanying property, Encore, there is nothing for a good half mile between Encore and the Riviera. The southern end is a booming metropolis of young and old, classy and crude, and features a handful of the world's largest hotels by room count. The casinos are newer, adorned with the priciest of fixtures and bright, colorful lobbies.

The North end, with Riviera and Circus Circus across from each other, Sahara and Stratosphere further up, and Slots A' Fun Casino nestled between McDonalds and Circus Circus, is only attended by guests staying at one of those casinos. The bus stops from Encore to downtown are bare. Even the Hispanics who cannot speak English while they unsuccessfully hand out escort catalogs (\$69 specials all over the place!) do not bother down on this end.



